

Easter Sunday Homily (based upon Matthew 28:1-10)

Who rolled back the stone and why?

- In our Gospel reading today, we find Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” (a disciple of Jesus but not our Blessed Mother) going to visit the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed. From a previous reading we know a large stone was placed in front of the entrance to the tomb and a seal affixed. To their amazement, when they arrive at the tomb, they find the stone blocking the entrance rolled back and the entrance accessible. Which leads to the obvious questions: Who rolled back the stone? and why?
- While the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke vary somewhat as to *who* rolled back the stone (Mark has the women finding a man in a dazzling white robe, Luke cites two men in dazzling white robes and Matthew attributes the movement of the stone to an Angel descending from heaven) all accounts agree it was a heavenly messenger.
- All Gospel accounts also agree the message delivered to the women, from that heavenly messenger, was the same: Jesus is not here, He has been raised!
- Which leads to the next question: Why was the stone rolled away from the entrance? You would think the answer is obvious: So Jesus could get out. But think again. Would Jesus who walked on water; restored sight to the blind; and raised someone from the dead, need to have the stone rolled away so He could walk out of the tomb? Not likely.
- So why did the women arriving there that morning find the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb? Not so Jesus could get out - but so they (and all of us)

could look in. Look in and see: Death has no power over Jesus, He is risen.

- That stone was rolled back so that those followers, in their darkest moment, when all seemed lost, could look in and see that there was light, there was hope – there could be joy again.
- How important it is for us to remember, this Easter Sunday 2020, that stone was also rolled back so we could look in. In these dark seemingly hopeless times we are in, we need to stare into that empty tomb and remember there is light, hope, healing and life- in Jesus.
- Notice the Gospel passage tells us as they left the tomb the women were were “fearful yet overjoyed”. And what happens? Jesus meet them on their way and the first thing He tells them is “ Do not be afraid?”
- If you search the Gospels you will find the words most spoken by Jesus were: “Do not be afraid.” Sure those women were afraid. They were uncertain as to what would happen next. Isn’t that true for us as well? Each day brings different news about the pandemic we face. We too are uncertain as to what happens next.
- Jesus message to us this Easter Sunday is the same message he comforted those two women with: “Do not be afraid”. Jesus tells them and us – God is in charge ! God has a plan. God will turn sorrow to joy.
- In our Old Testament reading today, from the Prophet Ezekiel, we hear God tell His people : “I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you.” In the darkness of this pandemic we can still see light: others looking out for others, giving of themselves for others. If we look closely we see God placing that new heart, new spirit into His people – as He promised. “Do not be afraid.”

- We need to hear the message of hope Jesus gives us this Easter. As the risen Christ encountered those women on the road, so He encounters us – in our hearts.
- As Jesus would soon appear to his followers, several times before His ascension to heaven , he appears to us. We need to look carefully.
- In several of His post resurrection appearances his disciples did not recognize Him at first. Remember those disciples on road to Emmaus. Remember doubting Thomas. Remember the stranger on the shore telling Peter and the others to lower their nets on the other side of the boat. In each of these encounters, when they looked closely, listened carefully and opened their hearts, they actually saw the resurrected Lord.
- We need to do the same. See the resurrected Lord. While not physically present, remember not all vision comes from the eye. What we see with our heart is far more reliable.
- In whom , through whom is the resurrected Lord encountering you. Bringing you light, hope and joy. Maybe the doctors, nurses and medical professionals bringing Gods love and healing to all those sick and suffering. The grocery person at the market, working so we can eat. This Easter let's look carefully. Stare into the empty tomb and hear the same message- He is not here. He is risen! Do not be afraid.
- What did Jesus do before leaving His disciples and ascending into heaven? He gave them a job to do. Go spread the Gospel. Bring His teachings his love his compassion to all the world.
- He gives us that job too. Pick up the phone today. Call someone to thank them or to tell them you love them or to see what they need and always to reassure them -

God is close and loves them dearly. Happy Easter.